

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

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TROOPERS TO FOCUS ON TRAFFIC SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY DURING THE NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY

MONTGOMERY – Alabama state troopers will concentrate on apprehending impaired drivers as part of their overall traffic enforcement activity during the New Year's holiday. Along with law enforcement statewide, they also will work to protect homeland security during the period.

All available troopers will be on duty to promote traffic safety during the holiday period, according to Col. W.M. Coppage, Department of Public Safety director. He said the additional patrol effort would be funded by federal overtime grants.

Gov. Bob Riley said, "Drunk driving is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The increased trooper patrols will help keep intoxicated drivers off the road at a time when many holiday functions involve alcohol."

Coppage urged those whose New Year celebrations will include alcohol to designate a driver, take advantage of special transportation offers, or make other plans to avoid the often-deadly consequences of drunken driving. He also cited the severe penalties in Alabama for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Coppage reminded motorists with cellular phones that they may dial *HP (*47) toll-free to report traffic emergencies, including suspected drunken drivers, to the nearest state trooper post. He asked Alabamians to report any type of suspicious activity they may observe to troopers or their local law enforcement agency.

Preliminary reports indicate that at least 22 people died in Alabama during the 102-hour Christmas holiday period from 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, through midnight Sunday, Dec. 28. The Alabama Department of Public Safety had estimated 17 traffic deaths during the 102-hour Christmas travel period. Last year there were 10 traffic deaths during a 30-hour period.

The traffic fatality prediction for New Year's is that 13 people may die in traffic crashes in Alabama during the 102-hour period from 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31, through midnight Sunday, Jan. 4, 2004.

Last year, six people died during the 30-hour New Year's travel period, three on rural roads and three in urban areas. At least one of the deaths involved alcohol, and five of the crash victims were not using safety belts.

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